

**National Plant Materials Technical Committee**  
**October 28-30, 2003, Tucson, AZ**  
Minutes

Attendees: Dave Burgdorf, Joel Douglas, Dan Ogle, Larry Holzworth, John Lloyd-Reilley, Rick White, John Englert

**Upcoming Dates**

December 12, 2003 – Review Strategic Plan and provide comments back to Englert

February 9-13, 2003 – Next committee meeting held in St. Louis, MO.

**Discussion Items**

- 1) Previous action items were reviewed and the Action Item register was updated
- 2) PM Strategic Plan development – review and discussion
  - a) **Action Item** – **Ogle** – review list of standards and confirm those which have vegetative practices involved. Due 11/21/03
  - b) **Action Item** – **NPMTC** – review short list of veg-related practices within each region and come up with a % that PM releases or technology is involved
  - c) **Action Item** – **NPMTC** – review draft Strategic Plan and provide comments back to Englert for consolidation. Due 12/15/03
- 3) Performance measure development
  - a) Performance goals worksheet was reviewed
  - b) The method currently used for assessing PMC performance (index) was discussed and reviewed as background.
  - c) **Work completed** – A list of PMC activities important to measuring performance was generated, points were assigned to different factors and a preliminary weighting was assigned to each area
  - d) **Action Item** – **Englert** – Prepare spreadsheet and test data and run a few examples of performance through the new method.
- 4) Release Procedures – finishing up and formalizing
  - a) Descriptions of release types
  - b) Pre-release worksheet
  - c) Redefining the approval process
  - d) **Action Item** – **Englert** - prepare bulletin informing PM staff that new release policy should be used and that there is anew procedure for processing approvals on releases.
- 5) National PM Meeting/ Training Conference (Douglas/White)
  - a) Meeting is planned for week of Feb 23 to be held concurrently with NRCS Grazing
    - i) Joint kick-off session to be held for part of the first day
  - b) People need to come away with an understanding of what we are doing which is good as well as what needs more attention, and how we are going to address deficiencies.

- c) Important to emphasize how each PMC fits into the PM Program as well as how the PM Program fits into the agency.
    - i) Need to really try to show this to SRCs and STCs.
  - d) What will this meeting accomplish? (NPMTC thoughts)
    - i) Provide Direction - Where is the program going? How do we get there?
    - ii) Unify our activities and operations
    - iii) What has made our program successful for the last 50 years?
    - iv) What are problems? Poor releases, little documentation, poor science
    - v) What is your responsibility as a PMC?
  - e) Emphasis of why the program is important and selling the program to SRCs and management is important to do right up front the very first day.
  - f) Panel discussion – one each STC, SRC, PMCM, PMS discuss what they think is important to get from the PM Program and why is it important.
  - g) **Work completed** – A tentative agenda was prepared outlining the key topics to cover and how the meeting might be structured. Next step is for Rick to take this to the meeting committee for review and refining.
- 6) Biofuels/Biomass proposal
- a) Current status of proposal was discussed
  - b) The Request for Pre-Proposals is expected out soon with an anticipated deadline of mid to late November
  - c) Biomass committee will not meet in person to discuss the pre-proposal but will need to meet if the pre-proposal is accepted.
- 7) Marketing Update
- a) Plant Solutions (eNewsletter) – Nov/Dec issue is on agroforestry; list server e-mails went up more than 1200 people after last issue
  - b) Video – video editing scheduled for late November with video completion by end of year.
- 8) Update of NPMAC activities and NPMTC action items
- a) PM Laboratories – expanded role for PMCs?
    - i) A limited number of PMCs responded – don't know if they realize the importance of gathering this data.
    - ii) Types
      - (1) Wet chemistry tests
      - (2) Mode of reproduction
      - (3) Chromosome counts
      - (4) Seed germ requirements for new species
    - iii) **Decision** – Restarting labs or trying to service all NRCS needs from PM is not in the best interest for the Plant Materials Program. There is not enough apparent need within the program to justify preparing a proposal for this work. Most can be accomplished through existing external labs or MOUs with universities or ARS.
    - iv) **Best option** at this time is to have a Program Leader's reserve to handle these costs. Funds could be allocated as needed to PMCs through an allowance change. Requests for such funding could come forward with budget requests each spring.

- b) VegSpec – need more detailed analysis
  - i) Need more specific examples; include printouts and analysis of good and bad recommendations made by VegSpec.
  - ii) Concern is that uninformed users might use poor recommendations generated by VegSpec.
  - iii) **Action Item – Englert** – contact Scott Peterson to find out how much VegSpec is used and who the users are.
  - iv) **Action Item – NPMTC** – Prepare cover letter with exactly what is needed and when to respond. Each committee member send to 2-4 people in their regions and request that 2-4 real-life tests be run, prepare a critique, and compare against FOTG for accuracy.
- c) PM Trainee Program – develop white paper
  - i) As follow-up to previous meetings, this was discussed at the NPMAC. NPMAC wants a white paper prepared.
  - ii) Contents
    - (1) Analysis updated and interpreted, 9 prof positions by 2005, 17 by 2008, 23 by 2011
    - (2) Needs and potential for special niche projects
    - (3) Number positions needed (10) potential locations (WAPMC, STPMC, IDPMC, MSPMC, NDPMC, KSPMC, MDPMC, AZPMC, NYPMC, MTPMC), and grade (GS-7, require them to move for a GS-9 if appropriate).
    - (4) Person must have potential to be a PM Manager and a leader in the program
  - iii) **Action Item – Englert** – Prepare draft of workload analysis and the need for a PM trainee program. Complete by January before the next NPMAC meeting.

#### 9) Direct Charges

- a) How PM staff charge time in the new system will vary by state.
- b) **Concern** – Under the new direct charge system, PMC's time charged (to US-PMC) can only be as much as funded by CO-46. Under this system, any deficiencies in staff budgets are made up elsewhere and staff time is charged to these alternate codes. This makes sense since much of the work at PMCs can be justified to show benefits to CTA or various programs. However, the full cost to support the PM Program will never be known, since we can charge only that amount of time that there is money for. This is a concern for identifying the true cost for operating the PM Program and to make CO-46 independent of other NRCS funding. This should probably be brought up to the NPM Advisory Committee.

#### 10) Safety Guidelines

- a) John Rissler has prepared a 49 page document outlining safety considerations for PMCs.
- b) Document needs to be reviewed for completeness, then once finished distributed to PMCs. This will either suffice as the PM Safety Handbook, or will serve as a template for PMCs to customize. NPM needs to be updated to reflect that this document is available.

#### 11) Technical Committee composition

- a) Regional Coordinator positions need to be part of the NPMTC. Until we know who fills the new positions, no changes will be made in NPMTC structure. If Coordinators are not very familiar with PM, then we will need current committee to brief them on key issues. If Coordinators are very familiar with PM, committee composition could be changed – maybe one Coordinator and one PM person per region??